

Retro #32 Digging Up the Past

In 1994 St. Stanislaus launched a 10-year archeological study of the school's campus through an integrated curriculum approach. The Sesqui Project, set to conclude in 2004 for the 150th anniversary of SSC, involved students and teachers with hands-on experience in archeological excavations, lab analysis, and research, utilizing materials recovered scientifically from the school's historic campus. Classroom studies supplemented and reinforced the field experiences.

Students, with the help of professional scientists and technicians led by Dr. Marco Giardino of NASA and Al Jensen of the Naval Oceanographic Center, used surveying instruments to establish points and elevations, laid out grids at excavation sites, recorded field data in log books, screened dirt and sand for artifacts, and measured features of the artifacts found in the pits.



All grade levels got involved and students kept logs of their field work. Senior Matt Carver, a member of the initial dig, wrote in his field notes in April 1994 *"As children we all dream of digging for buried treasure and now we dig for a lost dream which will give us a treasure map to our sacred past."* Matt, who worked in Pit 3 near the old Back School on the corner of Bookter and Hancock streets, noted on the third day of his dig that excitement was mounting as students *"found some glass, nails, and brick fragments. One nail was found 20.5 cm below the crust. At 18 cm we found a penny, and half a washer."*

SESQUI PROJECT

Second Dig of the Sesqui Project yields Artifacts



Seniors excavating during the Second Dig of the Sesqui Project opened four pits. Pit Four sites yielded substantial artifacts including turn of the century bottles pictured above. The Sesqui Project is a ten year experiment in the social sciences which integrates archaeology, anthropology, history, geography, and political science in the curriculum. Due to the historic importance and significant antiquity of the school, the project emphasizes history, archaeology and geography through hands-on research and data collection from scientific archaeological excavations on the school's ground.



Eric Labat,'80, (right) was one of 4 professionals from the Naval Oceanographic Center who guided SSC students during the Second Dig of the Sesqui Project.



Al Genin,'60, (right) the engineering mentor of the project, poses with his senior pit crew.

SUMMER 1995

In 1996, the SSC Archeology Club, moderated by junior high science teacher Mary Jo Barr, participated in the project, focusing mainly on pottery shards.



SSC Archeology Club
Feb. 1996
with moderator Mary Jo Barr
and collector Cal Mayer

BULLETIN BOARD

Sesqui Dig 1997



Future Site of Diboll Memorial Walkway

Before cement is laid for the new Collins C. Diboll Memorial Walkway, students from the Archeology Club excavated the area. Bro. Loyola Mattingly, SC, advised the students of the location of a former infirmary and tool shed that were torn down in the 1950's. The new walkway will keep students dry during the many heavy rainstorms that occur in southeast Mississippi.

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Collection of Artifacts Donated

Mr. Cal Moyer, an amateur archeologist from Bay St. Louis, donated his extensive collection of Indian artifacts and other found items to the Sesqui Project at St. Stanislaus College Prep. Over four years Cal had collected pottery shards dating from the Marksville Period (200 B.C.-200 A.D.) and the Late Woodland through Mississippian Periods (400 A.D.-1500 A.D.). The site, from which this collection was recovered on the beach south of the Bay St. Louis bridge, has been designated as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places by Jackson's office of Archives of History.

Mr. Moyer donated his collection knowing that these artifacts would support the classroom work and research associated with the school's ten year archeological project.

Marco Giardino, Ph.D., mentor of the Sesqui Project, said "this significant ceramic collection is representative of the styles and manufacture of early American Indians. Numerous shards, decorated with incised lines and punctations, date from the first millennium A.D. and even earlier. Also of interest is the historic artifact collection which includes 19th century tools, metal toy soldiers, hurricane lamps and historic bottles."



Cal Moyer describes a shard from his private collection which he donated to SSC for the Sesqui Project.



Third Dig of the Sesqui Project

In April, the seniors conducted the third dig of the Sesqui Project, the ten year archeological investigation of the SSC campus. One excavation was reopened from last year's work with two other adjacent excavations all of which yielded nails, bottles, ink bottles, ribs, metal pieces, shards of earthenware, bottle caps and assorted discards from the Back School era. NASA and NAVOCEANO were again corporate sponsors who lent professionals who guided the students' investigation. Marco Giardino, Ph.D., from NASA, mentor of the project; Al Genin '60, surveyor, and Ms. Mary Pyles, from NAVOCEANO, have been with the project during these first three years.



Seniors dig with a NAVOCEANO professional during the 3rd dig of the Sesqui Project.

Summer of 1996

Seniors Have Corporate Support For Dig



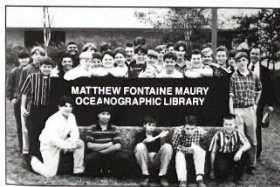
Seniors gathered with professionals from NASA and NAVOCEANO after leveling Pit 3 at 25 centimeters during the fourth year of the Sesqui Project. Standing in the second row (l-r) is Mr. Al Jensen who coordinated the Personal Excellence Program (PEP) NAVOCEANO volunteers; Mr. Eric Labat '80 from NAVOCEANO, and Mr. Al Genin '60 who has been a project director since 1994 in charge of site location and the official log book.

Found: Evidence of European Cultivation

The research being conducted by Mr. Marco Giardino, Ph.D., project mentor, and Mr. Genin has documented the European owners of this property. This stratigraphic evidence of agriculture permits the students to surmise that this land was occupied and tilled prior to the use of the property as the Back School by the Brothers.

Mr. Giardino directed the students to auger down in the center Pit 6. At about 80 centimeters from the surface, white beach sand was discovered providing evidence of what is known as the Gulfport Formation, a coastal feature formed during the last ice age about 20,000 years ago. Careful excavation of the surface of the sand formation revealed three circular postmolds, associated with a still unknown structure. Future excavations will attempt to identify the date and function of this old building.

Summer of 1997



Br. Eduardo Balducoda (far right) and his physical science class toured the Naval Oceanographic Center and the library at Stennis Space Center.

The Sesqui-Dig Project proved very successful and students learned while having fun digging up the past.